



10

PEOPLES
AND
LIFESTYLES

Anthropology



Many of the early colonists of Queensland who founded the museum—Coxen and his friends in the Philosophical Society—had broad, liberal educational backgrounds that enabled them to dabble in many areas. This was also true of others who had an association with the museum—members of the board of trustees as well as the directors, de Vis, Hamlyn-Harris and Longman. They were all interested in evolution, and the new concepts proposed by Darwin included the evolution of man. Aborigines were regarded as representing ‘living exemplars of one of the earliest stages in the evolution of mankind. Their social customs and material culture were deemed an appropriate subject for museums which were fascinated by evolution’¹. Aboriginal anthropology was therefore seen as a branch of the natural sciences and it was displayed ‘in taxonomic classification comparable to (that of) fossils or fauna’¹. Eventually this view was to have an unfortunate consequence, for in the 20th century it alienated Aborigines, who did not accept that museums were protecting, rather than exploiting, the material evidence of their culture. Nevertheless it was a view that had ensured that aboriginal and other anthropological material was collected by the Queensland Museum and, indeed, by the museums of other colonies too.

Hair combs decorated with red, yellow and black dyed cane strips from Malaita, Solomon Islands, collected by Captain W.H. Lawrence master of labour-trade ships, and purchased by the museum in 1901.



European notions of a paradise in the south-western Pacific were an additional influence on much of the collecting from the islands to the east and north of Australia. Pacific cultural material—ranging from embalmed heads to ornate spears and elaborately carved figures—was acquired by curio hunters and in due course found its way into museums. In fact, Pacific displays in museums appear to have been merely collections of curios right up to the early 20th century. Gradually, as men saw the south-western Pacific as less than paradisaical, the emphasis changed and the objects were classified and fitted into an evolutionary sequence in much the way Aboriginal and other anthropological material had been from the first.



A ‘tomahawk’ from New Guinea donated on 24 April 1874 is the earliest record for the museum’s anthropological collections. However, the inventory signed in February 1876 by A.C. Gregory, the first chairman of the board of trustees, shows that at that date there were already 227 anthropological items—171 from Australia, six from Torres Strait, 15 from New Guinea, 25 from Island Melanesia and 10 from New Zealand. Thus, it is probable that at least some of this material had been acquired earlier than 1874. The status of these anthropological collections is clear: they

Previous page: Message sticks from the museum’s collection discussed by Hamlyn-Harris in ‘On messages and message sticks employed by the Queensland Aborigines’ (*Mem. Qd Mus.* 1918 6:13–36).

were relegated to the last section of the inventory — headed 'Curios, Machinery, Weapons and Furniture'.

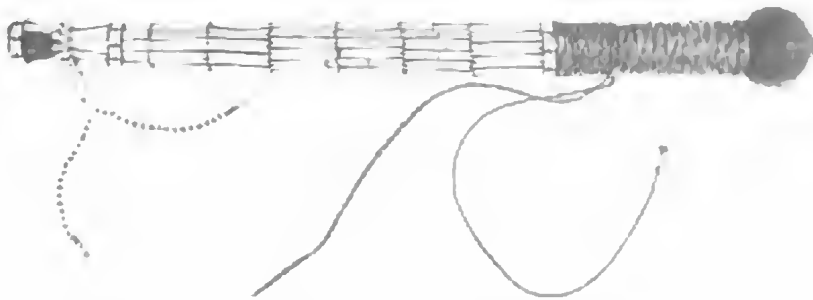
The South-west Pacific

By 1884 the anthropological collections in the museum had expanded to about 700 items, over half of which were from the islands of the south-western Pacific — a change had occurred in the ratio of Australian to Pacific collections from that of 1876 that foreshadowed a permanent bias. It reflected the growing interest of Queenslanders in the neighbouring islands and peoples as exploration revealed possibilities for trade, mineral deposits and cheap labour for the state's burgeoning sugar industry.



Wari hau ceremonial batons, South Malaita, Solomon Islands collected by Captain W.H. Lawrence master of labour-trade ships in the 1890s. Purchased by the museum in 1901.

The exploitation of these peoples for labour — the labour-trade — brought ships and men from Australia to the Pacific islands. Under government regulations each labour-trade vessel had to be accompanied by a government agent from the immigration department. These gentlemen were often reasonably well educated in the Victorian tradition, eager to do their bit for the advancement of science. They, in their turn, influenced the less scholarly ships' masters and both — often from the same vessel — collected zoological and, apparently as an afterthought, ethnological material which they offered as donations or for sale to the museum. Involvement in the labour-trade was often a violent and dangerous occupation, especially to the islander recruits, but also to the Europeans. Indeed, Douglas Rannie, previously a government agent and a donor, collector and librarian at the museum, noted that —



Whilst engaged on the work of classification (of the Queensland Museum collection) the names of former comrades as they recurred on the contributors lists recalled many pathetic incidents and associations of dear friends who sleep their last long rest beneath the waters of the blue pacific or whose lone resting place is known alone to the painted warriors of some savage isle².

Details are revealed in the records themselves: spear that wounded Captain J.W. Coath on the island of Espiritu Santo — 18 March died 27 April 1874, donated by F.J. Pearce, government agent of the *Jessie Kelly* on August 12, 1874; the Ramparamp effigy from Malekula donated on 27 August, 1883 by Mrs Belbin the widow of Captain R.J. Belbin shot and killed on the neighbouring island of Ambrym the day after acquiring the item.

The major part of the museum's collections from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu was acquired or collected (and donated later) during the period 1885-1906. Donors included senior public servants connected with



Ancestral board from a men's house at Maipua, Gulf of Papua, collected by Sir William MacGregor and transferred to the museum in 1894.

the immigration department, and politicians — notably Sir Thomas McIlwraith and Sir Samuel Griffith who were consistent political opponents not the least over the labour-trade issue.

The New Guinea Connection

This was the age of imperialism and annexation. Suspicion of German activities on the island of New Guinea, and perhaps a hope of more recruits for the labour trade, led to the declaration of the Protectorate of British New Guinea in 1884. The second special commissioner administering that protectorate from 1886 to 1888 was an ex-premier of Queensland, John Douglas, who was also on the museum board of trustees concurrently with his New Guinea appointment. Two collections were made during his administration, one for display at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London and the other for the Queensland Court of the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition of 1888. These collections were the beginning of a systematic sampling of cultural items rather than the random assortment of curios usually collected from this part of the world. In the end, the New Guinea collections represented a remarkable and almost unique archive of a people's lifestyle, which the collectors — mistakenly — believed to be entirely unaffected by western European incursions. The collections reflect foresight on the part of those who made them and an understanding of the true role of a museum — an understanding that is rarely found, even today.

The first collection, of some 178 items, was purchased by the Exhibition's Queensland commissioners — who included two museum trustees and the curator, and was intended as a donation to a proposed colonial museum in London. Fortunately, the collection was returned to Australia in error, and it was transferred to the Queensland Museum³. The colonial museum didn't eventuate in any case. The second collection was made by Anthony Musgrave of the British New Guinea administration at Douglas' direction and was intended for the museum after the exhibition had closed^{4,5}.

Meanwhile the protectorate had been replaced by another form of colonial government headed by a new administrator, Sir William MacGregor, an Aberdeen-trained medical practitioner with previous colonial experience in the Seychelles and Fiji⁶. Administration of the colony of British New Guinea was unusual in that it was divided between the Colonial Office in London and the separate self-governing Australian colonies of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, each contributing to its operation. All despatches to the Colonial Office were sent through the governor-in-council in Queensland. During the early part of his administration MacGregor looked to Queensland for aid in framing ordinances, auditing accounts and so on, so it was a normal occurrence for him to approach the Queensland government when he had to find a home for the collection of several hundred artefacts from Musgrave's collection at the close of the Melbourne Exhibition. MacGregor's intentions in regard to this collection were made in a despatch to Sir Henry Norman, governor of Queensland:

There was brought recently from British New Guinea a valuable collection of bird skins and there are other articles of natural history or ethnology collected by officers paid by the Government, and therefore public property. They are an asset of the Government of British New Guinea, as they have been procured by its paid officers but it does not appear to me that they should be kept in British New Guinea. It is therefore my opinion that it would be better that provision were made in the public museum in Brisbane for the

proper exhibition of New Guinea collections, as a separate and permanent branch of that establishment⁷.

Having received the agreement of the Queensland government MacGregor proceeded to have further large collections made under his direction. Initially these were zoological, the first ethnological consignment of 2876 items not arriving until October 1892. He later stated his reasons for undertaking this task:

The collection belonging to this Colony has been made with the object of it possessing as full a set of arms, utensils, products of different kinds, etc., as would illustrate its past and present position in the future⁸.

and again later he observed —

Timely warning has been taken by the omission by Fiji, Hawaii and some other places to secure collections.....of the natives before it is too late⁹.

Knowledge of these collections apparently reached the British Museum, for in late 1892 it requested through the secretary of state for colonies, Lord Ripon, that the British New Guinea administration aid it in the acquisition of ethnological collections from the Micronesian islands and New Guinea. MacGregor suggested that a catalogue of the collections in the museum should be forwarded to the British Museum for its consideration. Charles de Vis, the curator, appears to have stalled — he provided a manuscript catalogue that was forwarded to London. Augustus W. Franks at the British Museum complained that the catalogue gave insufficient detail¹⁰, and made a general request for items from a wide range of localities. de Vis pointed out that due to the reduction in museum staff—1893 being a depression year—he had ‘no longer the time to bestow upon’ the preparation of a systematic catalogue and that ‘until the catalogue is finished it would be injudicious to set aside for presentation to other museums any objects which until critically examined may appear to be duplicates. This has been done in cases which have been reported and regrettably mistakes have naturally been made in consequence’¹¹. He therefore recommended that the matter of the transfer of material to the British Museum be deferred, a conclusion with which the Queensland premier and Sir William MacGregor concurred. By that time MacGregor had amassed another large collection of 2136 items and this arrived in Brisbane on 1 August 1894.

During a visit to Brisbane that year MacGregor gained the impression, apparently in conversation with de Vis, that the museum understood it had the right to exchange specimens from the British New Guinea collections. He entirely dissented from this view, and formally notified the Queensland governor a year later that he regarded ‘the Curator and Trustees of the Queensland Museum simply as custodians of the British New Guinea collection and as possessing no power whatever to alienate any article in the collection’¹². Subsequent correspondence between MacGregor and the Queensland government over the next twelve months ended when the chief secretary Sir Hugh Nelson—also a donor— informed MacGregor that the government had ‘no desire to dispute the propriety rights of British New Guinea to these collections’¹³. However the chief secretary informed the governor (Lord Lamington)—

that notwithstanding their acquiescence in His Excellency's (MacGregor's) views as to the ownership of these collections, the Government are unable to regard with entire satisfaction the conditions which they are understood by him to maintain a separate



Shield from the Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea, collected by Sir William MacGregor and transferred to the museum in 1892.



Canoe washboard, Lower Fly River, collected by Sir William MacGregor and transferred to the museum in 1892.

and permanent branch of the Queensland Museum for the accommodation and care of property in respect of the accumulation of which they have no power or control.

He concluded:

it is thought desirable that His Excellency should be asked to propose some modification of his definition to the relations of the Trustees of the Queensland Museum to the British New Guinea collections which will not altogether leave out on account such powers as are generally understood to accompany trusteeship¹⁴.

Sir William MacGregor graciously modified his own stand in a despatch to Lord Lamington but he re-iterated his position in regard to the collection¹⁵:

The first and most important point is to make this official collection as complete as possible. To that I cannot but attach great importance, knowing as we do how seldom efforts are made to form a collection of that kind before it is too late. Its formation and preservation I have watched with jealous care, but purely as a public question and from the New Guinea point of view. I am now satisfied that it will be preserved intact and will not be broken up and dispersed.



Sir William MacGregor.

He then went on to suggest that the best specimens should be placed in the British New Guinea collection and that duplicates might be disposed of by the trustees, first to fill up vacancies in the national collection of the contributing colonies and in the British Museum and the remainder might be used as exchanges for the museum. These latter would 'be at the disposal of the Queensland Government as some acknowledgement for their co-operation in preparing and maintaining the British New Guinea Collection, without whose co-operation it could not exist'. Despite the fact that staff numbers had not changed since 1893 and that no catalogue had been completed, collections were assigned late in 1897: 949 items to the Australian Museum, Sydney; 833 to the National Museum of Victoria; 775 to the British Museum and 1635 to the Queensland Museum. The remainder comprised the British New Guinea collection and the museum's share of the duplicates, together with two further consignments that arrived in December 1897 and October 1898.

The British New Guinea collection of some 3000 specimens was not separately catalogued and, between 1908 and 1910, it was mixed with the museum's share and the duplicates, and the whole lot came to be known as the MacGregor Collection which in total comprised some 8000 specimens. This was to cause immense curatorial heartache in the future.

During MacGregor's administration in New Guinea 19 consignments of anthropological and zoological material (notably birds) were sent to the museum under the terms and conditions set out above. Anthropological items numbered 11,500, 'the most magnificent collection of Papuan specimens ever collected or ever likely to be collected'¹⁶. de Vis and other museum staff provided scientific appendices for inclusion in MacGregor's British New Guinea Annual Reports (see Chapter 8), but he was disappointed that the museum was unable to publish a printed catalogue of his anthropological collection. Later, during his term as governor of Queensland, MacGregor did have occasion to be pleased with the displays set up by Director Hamlyn-Harris.

Protectors and Collectors

Although the museum classified and displayed Aboriginal anthropological specimens, the staff actually collected ethnographic materials very rarely. During Kendall Broadbent's long service he made



Photograph from Wanigela Village, Collingwood Bay, Papua New Guinea, by Percy Money about 1904-1910. One of a series of 100 purchased by Hamlyn-Harris and used in the display of MacGregor material.

QUEENSLAND		MUSEUM.	
REGISTER OF THE "MACGREGOR"		COLLECTION OF NEW GUINEA ETHNOLOGY.	
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1	2	11. Head	11.2
1	3	11. Head	11.3
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Page from the MacGregor collection register catalogued by Rowland Illidge between 1918 and 1920.

only one small collection of 52 items from Cape York as early as 1884. Henry Tryon made minor collections in the Bunya Mountains and the Macpherson Range. A pattern had emerged for the Australian Aboriginal as well as the Pacific collections—a dependence on outside sources for acquisition.

A number of prominent Queensland residents were taking an interest in Aboriginal material culture. Notable among them were Dr W.E. Roth, Archibald Meston, Clement Wragge, Stephen Buhot, the Rev. N. Hey and J.C. Coghlan. Public servants, a missionary and a grazier, they were all donors or vendors of Aboriginal collections to the museum in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Between them they accounted for 77.5% of the total Aboriginal collections in 1910 (3027 items). In 1897 the first two were appointed, respectively, northern (later chief) and southern protector of Aborigines. They were all making collections that reflected a culture that was undergoing traumatic change as a result of the arrival of Europeans—the moving frontier had rolled over the Aboriginal people and they were already fringe dwellers.

Roth, a scholar, carried out intensive ethnographic research in northern and north-western Queensland between 1894 and 1905. In a letter to de Vis he wrote: 'I am *trying* to do good scientific work..... my chief aim is to treat the northern ethnology from a comparative point of view'¹⁷. He also made collections 'I may tell you that I applied for and was



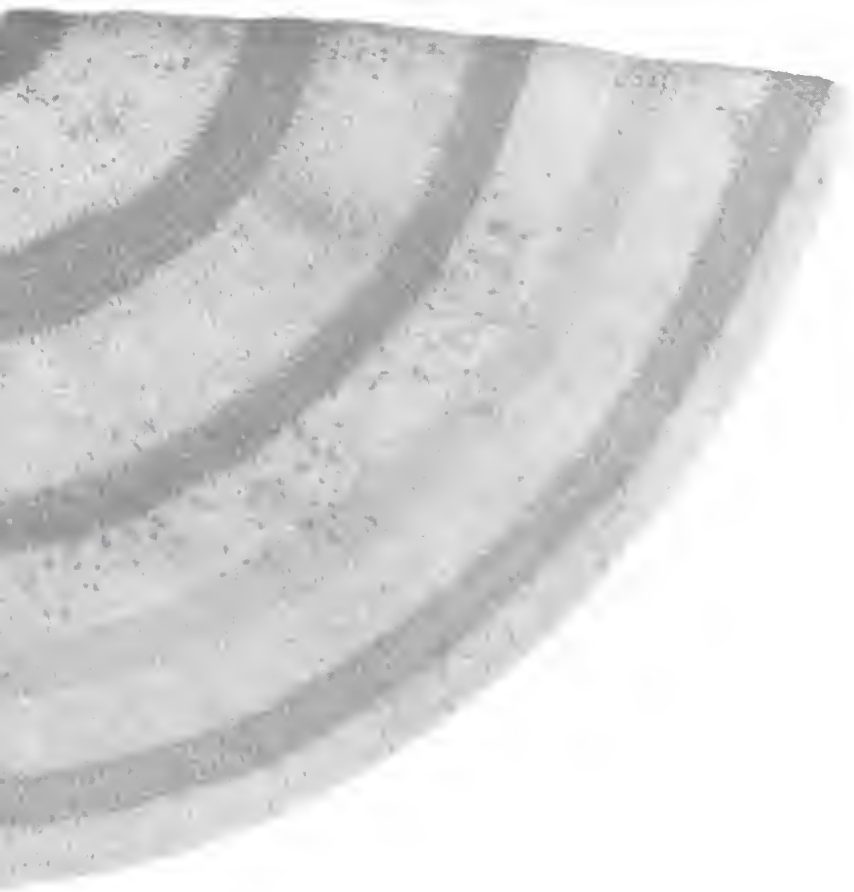
Pituri bag, used for carrying and storing pituri—a nicotine drug from the plant *Duboisia*, used and traded in western Queensland. One of 207 items purchased from J.A. Coghlan for £15.10.0 in 1897.

granted, a small amount of tobacco annually in order to purchase curios from the blacks for your museum'¹⁷. Between 1900 and 1903 Roth passed 330 well documented items to the museum; and the government, through the Home Secretary's Department, began publishing the first eight bulletins of his *North Queensland Ethnography*, as it had his earlier work *Ethnological Studies among the North-west-central Queensland Aborigines*. He resigned in 1905 amid some controversy which included his sale, to the Australian Museum in Sydney, of a collection of 2000 Aboriginal artefacts, a major part of which was certainly 'the property of the Queensland Government'¹⁸. Robert Etheridge indeed 'made a brilliant move..... when he acquired for the Australian Museum Roth's invaluable collections from Queensland and arranged for the (Australian) Museum to publish bulletins 9-18'¹⁹. It is not obvious why Roth would have abandoned the Queensland Home Secretary's Department as the publisher of his bulletins nor, indeed why he sold the specimens to the Australian Museum for £400—a large sum in those days. Certainly there had been rumours of his selling specimens as early as 1903 and perhaps he felt he had to leave Queensland. He may even have been concerned about the Queensland Museum's ability to conserve the material—de Vis, in 1905, being 76 and the staff then being reduced to four (see Chapter 3). However, if this was so, the mystery remains as to why he did not give, rather than sell, the collection to the Australian Museum.

While Roth was a professional scientist, Archibald Meston, at various times a member of parliament, journalist, editor and explorer, was, both



Necklace of mother-of-pearl stitched with fibre string, purchased from C.L. Wragge government meteorologist in 1900.





Ramparamp funerary effigy from Malekula Island, Vanuatu collected by Captain R.J. Belbin of the labour-trade vessel *Borough Belle* in mid-1883, donated by his widow following his death by gunshot on the neighbouring island of Ambrym.

before and subsequent to his appointment as southern protector of Aborigines, a collector and learned amateur. He was a keen observer but many of his published accounts were written thirty or more years after the events described. The museum acquired Queensland Aboriginal material from him between 1892 and 1907 and, as late as 1916, a further collection from Melville Island in the Northern Territory. Wragge, Queensland government meteorologist, was a man of completely different stamp who, in the course of his duties, travelled in the remote areas of western and northern Queensland and made large collections of Aboriginal material culture. He sold a large collection — in the vicinity of 900 items — to the museum in 1901.

Charles de Vis' major museological contribution began in 1892, when he started three separate anthropological registers — for New Guinea, for Australia and for the south-western Pacific Islands and elsewhere. They were numerical registers and the entries ranged from meticulous to slipshod, depending on workload and staffing levels. Importantly for later curators de Vis not only described items but he measured them too — in metric units.

After de Vis' retirement in 1905, C.J. Wild, in an acting capacity, directed a gentle slide into the doldrums. During this caretaker period donations were few although funds were found to purchase collections from Meston and Buhot. The new museum director, Hamlyn-Harris, was appointed in 1910.

The Hamlyn-Harris Approach

Ronald Hamlyn-Harris' appointment had particular effect on the museum's anthropological collections. He was the only director to profess a personal interest in ethnology and his influence can be seen in the collections, display, research and publication and public lectures.

As early as February 1911 he had distributed a printed circular to police officers (as protectors of Aborigines), missionaries and teachers in most centres of northern and western Queensland including the Torres Strait. The pamphlet sought their help in making ethnological collections for the museum. The replies were usually couched in the following terms 'Civilization has reduced the blacks in this district to a very few, who retain no weapons etc. of historic value'²⁰ and 'I am afraid so far as this District is concerned that I will be unable to accede to your request as the aborigines have been (such) a number of years civilized that they have abandoned using their native implements'²¹. However, collections were received that year from the more outlying centres of Croydon (Sgt Sullivan), Mapoon Mission (Rev. N. Hey), Turn-off Lagoon via Burketown (Const. E. Smith) and Mitchell River Mission (Mr H. Mathews). Collections continued to filter in over the next six years as a result of this circular and later there was some material from the chief protector of Aborigines and other correspondents from Weipa, Aurukun, Coen, Mornington Island, Cairns, Cardwell and Yam. Badu, York, Darnley and Murray Islands in the Torres Strait. The collections, together with a major purchase from the Cairns region made during Hamlyn-Harris' term, were the last major field collections of Queensland Aboriginal material culture made for the museum before the mid-1970s. Collections were also received from the Northern Territory notably Roper River, Melville Island and Port Essington. During this period over 2800 items were added to the Australian Aboriginal material culture collection — in seven years Hamlyn-Harris had almost doubled the Australian collections.

He also arranged for collections to be made on the Fly River in Papua

*All communications to be
addressed to the Director, R.
Hamlyn-Harris, D.Sc., F.R.M.S.,
F.Z.S., F.L.S., &c.*

QUEENSLAND MUSEUM,

BRISBANE, _____ 191

SIR,

The Director of the Queensland Museum, presuming upon your willingness to promote the growth of an Institution tending to the advantage and reputation of the State, respectfully begs your co-operation in his endeavours to further augment the collections under his charge, and in all Departments of the Museum.

The richness of this Country in objects of Natural History cannot be too fully represented in the National collections in their Mineral, Fossil, Animal, and Aboriginal Departments.

Since the Aboriginal Tribes are fast dying out, every effort should be made to acquire those symbols of the life of the original Australian inhabitants, whose rites, ceremonies, customs, and traditions are becoming obsolete and being entirely lost to us.

The Director, therefore, appeals to you in the confidence that you will take every opportunity of securing specimens of all kinds, and forward them to the Museum.

Instructions as to the best methods of preservation will be gladly given if desired.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) R. HAMLYN-HARRIS,

Director

Circular sent by Hamlyn-Harris to police stations seeking help with collections.



A necklace of reed beads strung on 2-ply fibre string from the Gulf of Carpentaria, sent by Constable Martin in response to Hamlyn-Harris' circular.

(Sir Rupert Clark Bt) and in various centres of occupied German New Guinea (W. Potter) and purchased collections from the Gulf of Papua (S.G. McDonnell) and the Solomon Islands and Vanuata (Mrs P. Tarnaros, C.A. Bernays).

A new museum-wide system of registration was introduced in 1911. Hamlyn-Harris followed the recommendation of the Etheridge report adopting and adapting the system used in the Australian Museum. Two registers were begun for anthropology early in 1911; QE for Queensland Aboriginal material and E for non-Queensland material. Later, in 1914, a third register—NGE—was introduced for New Guinea material. All incoming specimens were now documented and registered within days of their receipt by the museum.

In 1913 J.H.P. Murray the lieutenant-governor of Papua had again raised objections to the possibility of the museum exchanging items from the MacGregor collection and requested that a catalogue be prepared. Hamlyn-Harris vigorously denied that any material had been exchanged, stating that the collection had 'been zealously guarded and since I have been in charge not one single specimen has left the building'²². He agreed to compile a register and in fact £50 was placed on the Papuan government estimates for the financial year 1914-15 and sent to the museum to cover the cost of cataloguing. Two copies of a specially printed MacGregor (MAC) register conforming to the Queensland Museum format were purchased and paid for by the Commonwealth government. Compilation of the register began in 1915 but the work was laid aside due to depleted staff and the £50 was returned upon Hamlyn-Harris's resignation.

The Etheridge report had criticised the sad state of the anthropological displays especially the MacGregor collection 'The cases are crammed to repletion, the specimens roughly sorted and not a label. Of what possible use is such a display?'²³. Hamlyn-Harris initiated a programme to modernize all the displays but particularly that of the MacGregor collection. He also supervised the construction of the diorama of the Aboriginal campsite which, with slight modifications, was exhibited until November 1985 (see Chapter 4).

Hamlyn-Harris was a marine biologist, not an anthropologist. In the manner of the time, this did not deter him from carrying out research and publication in anthropology. Some of this was pedestrian, some interesting and innovative and some archaic and still-born. Between 1911 and 1918 he published thirteen papers in the *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* and a number of notes and comments in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland*. Eight of the articles dealt with Queensland Aborigines, two with Torres Strait Islanders and four with Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands. Perhaps his most interesting and best researched project was a joint work with a chemist, Frank Smith, on fish poisoning and poisons used by the Aborigines of Queensland²⁴. Here he combined his own talents with his wide range of informants who, at his request, collected the ethno-botanical specimens for the museum.

He was not a noted field worker, but he took the opportunity during a lecture tour to the north in May 1914 to do some collecting on Aboriginal campsites on Dunk Island and near Yarabah, the former in the company of E.J. Banfield—journalist and author—who lived on Dunk Island and was, perhaps, his most erudite correspondent and collector. In late 1915 he again made an archaeological collection from Aboriginal shell midden sites in sand dunes in the vicinity of Bargara near Bundaberg.

The series of popular science lectures at the museum introduced by

Hamlyn-Harris in 1912, as well as the lectures given in provincial towns, always included some anthropological titles such as *Primitive Man in Australia* (R. Hamlyn-Harris, 1912); *Manners and Customs of the Solomon Islanders* (D. Rannie, 1914); *Fossil Remains of Man* (A.B. Walker, 1916); *Aborigines and their Customs* (R. Hamlyn-Harris, Bundaberg 1915).

In his seven years Hamlyn-Harris raised the status of the study of anthropology within the museum, and consolidated and built up the collections especially from Aboriginal Australia. As a result the collections were, in so far as resources permitted, professionally documented and curated and the displays were classified and well labelled by contemporary standards.

The Longman Years, 1917-1945

Hamlyn-Harris resigned in September 1917 and was replaced by Heber Longman who had been his senior scientific assistant since 1911. Longman was essentially a palaeontologist, his only real interest in the anthropological field was in physical anthropology. He published one paper on human crania in the *Memoirs* in 1918, but a year later writing to Professor A.C. Haddon in Cambridge he noted 'my time is now so greatly taken up with routine and administration work that I am seldom able to work at the crania'²⁵. In fact, he published no further work in this area. However, he was assiduous in gaining human skeletal material for the collection, especially from the police, and in the early years of his tenure he continued many of Hamlyn-Harris' programmes. However, he gradually lost touch with most of his predecessor's anthropological correspondents except E.J. Banfield, with whom he remained in close contact until the latter's death in 1924.

In July 1918, the £50 cataloguing grant from the Papuan government was returned to the museum and Longman employed 'Mr Rowland Illidge, a well-known local naturalist'²⁶ to continue the registration of the MacGregor collection 'at a fee of £2.10.0 per week of 4 days working from 10 am to 4 pm excluding one hour for lunch'²⁷. He began in late September, compiling both a register and a card catalogue. In October Longman asked for and received a further £50 from the Papuan government for display case and storage furniture. He also envisaged a comprehensive printed catalogue prepared by an eminent 'specialist in ethnology' and he twice mentioned the name of Dr Bronislaw Malinowski in this context²⁸⁻²⁹ but was informed that he would not be available as he would be 'leaving for England at an early date'³⁰. Malinowski was one of the founders of the British structural-functional school of social anthropology³¹ and considering his later published comments, that he had 'always had a certain amount of impatience with the purely technological enthusiasms of the museum ethnologist and that he considered the fetishistic reverence for an object of material culture is scientifically sterile'³², it is doubtful whether he would have undertaken the job.

The registration task proved to be so great that Longman sought and received permission to use the Papuan government's extra £50 to continue paying Illidge instead of purchasing display and storage furniture. Later a further £10 was obtained before the project was completed in May 1920. Illidge made a copy of the register in 1922 for the sum of £12 and it was despatched to Papua. This copy appears to have disappeared from the Papuan government anthropologist's office and bungalow in Port Moresby when Australian militia troops rioted in February 1942.

Between 1919 and 1923 Longman continued to consolidate Hamlyn-Harris' display work. New labels were prepared and all display items,



A bag from the rainforest in the Cardwell area, sent from Constable Creedy in response to Hamlyn-Harris' circular.

particularly Queensland Aboriginal material, were re-registered. A large proportion of the reserve collections in storage were also re-registered to the QE and E registers between 1924 and 1928.

Anthropological material donated or purchased during Longman's time included a number of important collections notably from Dutch New Guinea—Irian Jaya (H. Jackson 1920), the large Dr C.F. Marks collection from Australia, New Guinea and the Pacific Islands (1920), the Lee Bryce collection from North Queensland and Papua (1921), the Hartmann collection from the Port Moresby region collected in 1887 (Toowoomba City Council 1924), the Skertchly collection of European palaeolithic implements (purchased 1926), the Denning collection from Fiji (purchased 1935), the Archbold Expedition collection from the Fly River (1937), the Petrie Family collection from the Brisbane area (1939) and the W.S. Chaseling collection from eastern Arnhem Land (purchased 1940).

Rainforest sword clubs illustrate the adaptation of a new artefact for a traditional use. *This page*: the traditional article, collected in 1900; *opposite page*: a sword club made from a cross-cut saw blade, collected in 1915.



G.K. Jackson was appointed as a cadet in October 1937. He was a naturalist with an interest in Aboriginal anthropology especially developed during two years he spent in southwest Queensland before joining the museum staff. He took over the day to day running of the anthropological collections, becoming responsible for registration of incoming material, working on displays and providing public information. He collected archaeological material from sites in southern Queensland and published a number of small papers in *The Queensland Naturalist* and the *Memoirs*. Ken Jackson joined the 2/9 Battalion AIF in October 1939 and served with it in the United Kingdom, North Africa, Syria and New Guinea. During his service he visited as many museums as possible and even made collections in Egypt, Syria and New Guinea. His absence from the museum had a particularly detrimental effect on the anthropology collections. Longman noted in a letter to Chaseling—the missionary from Yirrkala in Arnhem Land who had sold, at cost, significant collections to many Australian museums—'As Mr Jackson of our staff, who is in charge of this section, is abroad with the AIF, we shall not be able to do much until his return'³³. Lieutenant Jackson was killed in action in the 'swamps of Sanananda' on 12 January 1943. In his will he left his private collection of 126 anthropological items from Australia and the Pacific to the museum. Unfortunately his service revolver, also donated, was stolen from the display gallery in a burglary in the 1970s. Due to war-time exigencies Jackson's position, for which he had been credited with yearly salary increments, was not filled after his death. Longman referred to this in a letter to Colonel J.K. Murray, head of the Army School of Civil Affairs (later first administrator of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea) 'As we have at present no specialist on our staff who is able to give full time to ethnology, I regret that I am unable to give more assistance'³⁴. Storage space had also become a problem. In 1944 Longman was forced to exchange a valuable Mornington Island raft with the South Australian Museum because the museum had 'no storage space for it'³⁵. In exchange the museum received two plaster casts. Longman, now suffering from ill health, retired in late 1945.

A Bleak Period, 1946–1965

Between 1946 and 1960, during much of George Mack's administration, the position of the anthropological collections was bleak. Only a small proportion of the material donated was registered, consequently some documentation has been lost. Ursula McConnell's important collection from western Cape York, which had been deposited on loan from the Australian National Research Council in 1935, had to be sent to the South Australian Museum in 1948 because the museum felt unable to store it adequately, was not interested in displaying it, and could not provide an avenue for publication. McConnell published her paper 'Native Arts and Industries on the Archer, Kendall and Holroyd Rivers, Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland' in the *Records of the South Australian Museum* in 1953. Some of McConnell's material however was passed to L.P. Winterbotham of the Anthropological Society of Queensland. That same year Winterbotham founded the Anthropology Museum at the University of Queensland, under his honorary curatorship. During the next decade and a half, that museum, with the help of the Anthropological Society became the centre for museum anthropology in Queensland. The Queensland Museum all but withdrew from the area, maintaining its own substantial collections but not actively seeking donations and carrying out field work only in emergencies. Storage conditions did not improve—to a request from an American postgraduate student for information on the number and locality of tapa cloth, Mack replied 'the way in which it is stored make it almost impossible to state what there is in the way of tapa cloth'³⁶.



Mack was certainly conscious of the importance of the collections in his care and indeed had endeavoured to obtain the services of a professional anthropologist to curate them. However, having convinced the public service commissioner of the need for such a position, it was some time before he could make an appointment owing to the lack of qualified people in Queensland. In April 1953, M.J.C. Calley, an honours graduate in anthropology from the University of Sydney was appointed assistant in anthropology. There was an immediate clash both of personality and theory. Calley was a social anthropologist of the British school and Mack an old museum man. Calley resigned after four months to continue postgraduate study and, before his premature retirement and death, became a reader in anthropology at the University of Queensland. Ironically, he was one of those instrumental in ensuring that the university's anthropology museum was professionally staffed and housed in modern purpose-built premises in 1972.

Mack made no attempt to fill Calley's position. For the remainder of his directorship the anthropology collections were curated by the director himself or by geologists, J.T. Woods and, after 1960, A. Bartholomai, both helped by museum assistants, notably B.J. Smith. From 1960, staff increases allowed some field examination of archaeological sites. Bartholomai together with photographer Stan Breeden surveyed and later published two Aboriginal stone arrangements on the Darling Downs in 1960. Mack himself made one trip to Carnarvon Gorge and Injune in 1961 and preparator D. Vernon with Smith collected on Mapala Station in 1963.

When Jack Woods became director in February 1964, he moved speedily to appoint a curator of anthropology. The position was advertised late that year, but Woods anticipated difficulties, as he indicated to R.V.S. Wright of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, 'While I realise that a suitable applicant may be difficult to find, I am very keen in getting this position filled if at all possible'³⁷. Eleanor Crosby, then a temporary lecturer at the University of Auckland, was finally appointed in April 1965. Her MA thesis commitments however delayed her arrival in Brisbane until October 1965. Meanwhile field inspections of sites continued to be made by other staff. A. Bartholomai and T. Tebble examined Aboriginal stone arrangements in the Emmet district in May 1964.

Putting Things Right, 1965-1985

When Eleanor Crosby eventually arrived she began cleaning and checking the collections, and registering the 19th century material — untouched since 1929. In fact, she tried to unravel the mysteries brought about by years of neglect. In two years Crosby and her assistant Penny Wippell added over 3000 entries to the anthropology register (in contrast to 266 entries between 1946-1960 and 709 entries between 1961-1965).

As the first permanent professional curator she also faced an enormous problem in the collection storage area. The collections were located in a number of separate nooks and crannies about the building; the storage furniture itself was inadequate, most of the collections being housed in galvanised iron storage tanks and old display cases, although a small number of custom-built, lightweight and insect proof wooden cupboards and drawer cabinets were in use. The mechanical damage due to overcrowding coupled with the lack of a conservator caused her much concern.

Because of the perceived need to concentrate on collection management and the limitation on funds, research opportunities were few. However, Crosby carried out archaeological fieldwork in the Condamine River, Taroom and Carnarvon Ranges in 1966 and on the Warrego River around Wyandra in 1967 and these trips resulted in research reports in the *Memoirs*. Some display projects were undertaken in conjunction with display staff, the most notable being the mini-diorama of the Samford Bora ring (see Chapter 4).



Eleanor Crosby, curator of anthropology, and Mary McKenzie, artist, measuring dimensions of the Samford Bora Ring, 1965. Penny Wippell, assistant in anthropology is standing at right.

Frustrated by the work situation, the lack of research opportunities, unequal pay for female professional staff and the possibility of forced resignation on marriage, and suffering a feeling of professional isolation — that could have been alleviated had the Queensland Public Service had a less parsimonious attitude towards professional development through conference participation, Eleanor Crosby gave three months notice of her resignation in early September 1967. She completed her PhD at the Australian National University in 1973 becoming a curator at the Northern Territory Museum and later a consultant archaeologist.

Michael Quinnell took over in February 1968. An honours graduate in archaeology from the University of Sydney, he had previous museum and field experience in Australia and India. Despite Eleanor Crosby's endeavours the collection management situation was still very grim. A mezzanine floor in the anthropology section, built after Crosby had left, created a little more space but there were no new storage units to use in this space.

Problems of collection management dominated staff activity for the next few years. Crosby's forecast in her letter of resignation — that there



Geoffrey Mosuwadoga, director of the Papua New Guinea National Museum, and Quinnell discussing the return of specimens from the MacGregor collection to New Guinea.

was at least three years work on the older collections — proved reasonably accurate. Some 4500 register entries were completed between 1968 and 1970 and another 1500 over the next five years. Inadequate storage proved to be a longer term problem. As the 1972 annual report pointed out 'The storage capacity for the anthropology collections has now reached an optimum. In the present space situation any further introduction of storage units will impinge on the already overcrowded work and office space, even though the storage is still inadequate'³⁰. The overcrowded storage, poor conditions including the lack of controlled environment, increased use of the material and lack of conservation facilities that were putting such strains on the collections and were so detrimental to their condition were alluded to in the Piggott Report¹. There was an improvement in 1976 when Australian ethnography, now a separate section under R. Hardley, moved into the south wing of the building that had been vacated by the Queensland Art Gallery. The Melanesian anthropology and Aboriginal anthropology and archaeology collections expanded into the new storage cabinets that by 1979 filled the recently acquired space to



Quinnell with artists Mary McKenzie and Eloise Gehrmann (right) cleaning chalk marks off rock, Scrub Creek Aboriginal engraving site.



Stencil art, Carnarvon Gorge, recorded by a museum party led by Quinnell.

capacity. Storage was no longer at crisis point—it was merely inadequate. The unavoidable damage that occurred, due to crowding and lack of environmental controls, emphasised the need for conservation facilities and trained staff. The appointment of a conservator, Neville Agnew, in 1980 and the slow build up of a temporary laboratory over the next few years has only begun to address the effects of half a century or more of neglect.

Meanwhile the MacGregor collection again came to notice. As early as 1969, questions were being asked by members of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea administration about the ownership of a number of anthropological collections held in Australian museums. The matter was raised at the 1970 and 1972 meetings of the Conference of Australia Museum Directors by representatives of the Papua New Guinea Museum. Quinnell had been independently researching the origins of the MacGregor material as part of a collection management exercise and this led him, in 1973, to an intensive examination of source materials in museum, state and commonwealth archives. Legal interpretations of these documents resulted in the announcement by the Queensland premier in late 1974 that, in principal, the collection would be returned when the new Papua New Guinea National Museum building in Port Moresby was completed and that both museums would confer on the selection and transfer of the collection. Informal and cordial discussions at curatorial and directorial level, initially with expatriate staff, were then instituted and continued for a number of years. Close relations were established, and Director Alan Bartholomai was an official guest at the opening ceremony of the Papua New Guinea National Museum in its completed building in 1977. By this time the Papua New Guinea staff had taken control and a typical Melanesian consensus was achieved when, in mid-1979, agreement on cataloguing and selection procedures was concluded. A pilot selection of shields from the MacGregor Collection to be returned to Port Moresby was made in February 1980 by the Papua New Guinea Museum director, Geoffrey Mosuwadoga, and the Queensland Museum's curator, Quinnell. At the same time a joint meeting of the boards of trustees of the two institutions was held to formally conclude the agreement whereby a substantial portion of the collection would be returned to Papua New Guinea, while that part of the collection to be retained in Queensland, in keeping with Sir William MacGregor's instruction, would have a separate identity in the museum collections and would be maintained in perpetuity for education and scientific purposes. By 1985 six selections had taken place, some 2100 items being returned to Papua New Guinea and 1697 retained by the Queensland Museum. In the vicinity of 4000 items remain to be selected in this continuing cooperative programme.

In 1968 the anthropology and archaeology section of the museum was responsible for Melanesian and Aboriginal ethnography—the extant cultures and lifestyles—and archaeology—past cultures and lifestyles. It was staffed by the curator and one assistant and was even further overloaded by the negotiations about the MacGregor collection. In particular, the items that comprised MacGregor's Papua New Guinea collections which, between 1908 and 1910, had been mixed with the museum's share and the duplicates, had to be identified. An extra assistant, Janet Buhmann, was appointed in 1974 to concentrate on the indexing and stocktaking of the MacGregor collection. She was succeeded by Arthur Palmer who between 1976 and 1979, not only continued her work, but also photographed each item.

Meanwhile, in 1974 Richard Robins was appointed on a 12-month grant from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies to catalogue Aboriginal ethnographical collections. Roger Hardley, who had succeeded Wippell in 1968 as the permanent assistant in the section, had begun to specialise in Aboriginal ethnography. When, in 1975, Aboriginal and Torres Strait ethnography became a separate section, Hardley became its curator. Julia Findlay, a graduate in anthropology, assisted him from 1982 to 1985, specialising in Torres Strait material.

Thus from 1975, some of the load — Aboriginal ethnography — had been lifted from Quinnell's shoulders. However, he was still deeply involved with the Papua New Guinea material, and Aboriginal archaeological items were being rapidly acquired by the museum as it was now the official repository under the *Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1968*. A solution was found by appointing an archaeologist to the position vacated by Palmer. Thus Robins, who had been working in the archaeology branch of the Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs since leaving the museum four years earlier, was reappointed to deal with Aboriginal archaeological collections. Norma Richardson succeeded Robins in 1984 and, with two Aboriginal trainees, Lori Richardson and Shane Rawson, implemented the system Robins had developed.



Quinnell (*centre foreground*) surveying Aboriginal rock shelter, Oakey Creek, Carnarvon National Park.



Joint museum and University of Queensland archaeological excavation in south-eastern Queensland in 1968.

In the Field, 1968-1985

Despite the pressures of collection management, the sections of Australian ethnography and of anthropology and archaeology carried out field work throughout the state from the time they were established.

Archaeological investigations by Quinnell between 1968 and 1970 were confined to local small-scale excavations on the Gold Coast and surveys and site examinations for the Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs — at Cooktown, Townsville, the Carnarvon Ranges, the coast and its hinterland both north and south of Brisbane and on Stradbroke Island. During the survey on Stradbroke Island Quinnell was detained by the police after he had been reported as behaving suspiciously with a coloured stick — a painted surveyor's ranging pole. In 1969 he recorded Aboriginal rock art near Gatton. Then, in a series of eight field trips between 1970 and 1975 that were funded by grants from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and the Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs, Quinnell recorded and researched Aboriginal rock art in the Carnarvon Ranges. Museum photographer Allan Easton usually accompanied him on these trips. This work 'yielded a detailed description of a Central Queensland art body and defined the general framework for future work in the area'³⁹. In 1975 Harley participated in archaeological work on Moreton Island.

In ethnographic field work between 1975 and 1977, made possible by grants from the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, Hardley photographed and documented items of traditional and transitional material culture at the Edward River settlement on Cape York (with Easton); at Mornington Island and Aurukun; and at Kowanyama, Bamaga and Thursday Island (with Palmer). Palmer participated in a Queensland Museum-Queensland University Anthropology Museum ethnographic investigation in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

Archaeological surveys and excavations were also conducted by Robins on Moreton Island in 1979 and 1980; and between 1980 and 1983 he began ethnoarchaeological work in north-west Queensland at Lawn Hill Gorge, on the Wellesley Islands, at Wujal Wujal on Cape York and at Doomadgee. Findlay participated in ethnographic field work in the Tully area in connection with preparations for a new Aboriginal display. Grants from the Australian Heritage Commission to re-examine and document



Michael Quinnell, curator of anthropology from 1968.

archaeological sites from which the museum already held items became available from 1980 to 1985 and funded the appointment of Norma Richardson and after her appointment to the permanent staff, the appointment of her successor Harvey Johnston.

Maintaining an interest in Papua New Guinea, Quinnell made field collections there during 1983 and made arrangements for the Papua New Guinea Museum to collect material for the museum in the future.

During these years most collection-based research by staff has been carried out as part of collection documentation procedures. An example of work of particular significance is that of Robins, Buhmann and M. Cause on the identification of woods used in Aboriginal spearthrowers. This demonstrated some of the inbuilt biases in museum collections that were made from a society undergoing rapid change. This is in part due to the museum's past role as a passive rather than active collector, dependant on donors from all walks of life who (with the exception of W.E. Roth) 'had no anthropological training and were neither sympathetic nor responsive towards the complexity of aboriginal society'. The collections show a bias 'towards the secular, technologically curious and materialist aspects of Aboriginal life'⁴⁰. For instance, while spears, boomerangs, stone axes and ceremonial objects were prized objects to these collectors, the simple humble objects of the people's lives—the objects used by the women, such as their digging sticks, were largely ignored.

Change, a continuum

No culture is static, for change occurs continuously. In indigenous Australian Aboriginal and Pacific Islander societies, influenced by European cultures and 20th century technologies and political and religious philosophies, change has been, and continues to be, rapid. These societies have gained high profiles in the world—overseas colonies have become nations and, in Australia, European cultures and peoples are changing too. Dynamic and adaptive societies respond to internal as well as external stimuli and cultures change accordingly.

The objects in museum anthropological collections are the raw data from which information can be derived about a culture now and in the past and about the modes, rates and directions of change. Collectors' backgrounds affect the content and context of the collections and the regions represented; and the perceptions of the observer are subjective—affected by personal and cultural influences. However, the objects themselves are real and true and the information that is contained in them is accurate and objective—for they are the material evidence, free of the interpretive ambiguity and the bias of written records.

A museum does preserve the evidence and the information but it does not preserve a culture, for a culture is a product and a part of a people's lifestyle.

When it moves to its new accommodation in South Brisbane the museum itself will be changing—by increasing and improving access to the collections and the information contained therein. Increased access will lead to increased participation by the community, and particularly by Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in research, education and display. Thus will they satisfy their needs to identify with their own cultural past and present and will recognise their part in the continuum of their peoples' histories.



Ceremonial mask, named Gasama, made by Ambram of Marawat Village, Yuat River, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea. Collected by P.J. Hallinan in 1982 and purchased by the museum in 1983.